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ABSTRACT

This study used ethnographic techniques to explore the adaptation of the Parents As Teachers (PAT) program in 7 child care centers in the St. Louis area during the 1988-89 school year. PAT is a parent involvement, family support program that begins in the home and sets the tone for a positive home-school partnership. Types of child care centers studied were nonprofit, corporate, hospital, United Way, community college, and private. The study's aim was to determine: (1) the ways in which the PAT program had been adapted and put into operation; (2) whether the adaptation had had an impact on families; and (3) whether the integrity of the model has been maintained. Discussions of the research methodology, the program, and the setting are followed by a narrative description and analysis. Detailed discussion of program implementation in the corporate-sponsored center focuses on the relationship between interactions and sentiments of program participants. Data revealed that even though the PAT adaptation was being successfully implemented in all but one of the centers, all the directors were struggling with the problem of integrating a new program into an established organizational system. However, the integrity of the program had been maintained, and goals had been reached. (RH)

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PARENTS AS TEACHERS NATIONAL CENTER

Parents As Teachers: Adaptation in Child Care Centers

REPORT SERIES

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University of Missouri St. Louis

PARENTS AS TEACHERS

THE NATIONAL CENTER

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Report #89-2: Parents As Teachers: Adaptation in Child Care Centers

ABSTRACT

Through ethnographic technique, the author explores the adaptation of the Parents as Teachers program in child care centers. Observations were made in seven child care centers in a variety of settings sponsored by public and corporate bodies. Findings are presented and synthesized.

Parents as Teachers: Adaptation in Child Care Centers

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Report #89-2: Parents As Teachers: Adaptation in Child Care Centers

It's 6:40 a.m. and as I get out of my car at Center I, a Dad is helping his 2-1/2 year old daughter, Maggie, climb out of their car as he holds baby Tommy. We enter the center together. Dad carries Tommy and Maggie carries her "baby", Becky. Tommy is crying, Dad comforts him. Maggie says, "Becky is sad, too." Dad comments to me "It's so hard...every day, but this is a wonderful place." We all go to the infant area to leave Tommy. Dad involves Maggie in settling Tommy and telling the teacher that Tommy was fussy all last night. Maggie relates that Becky is sad, too. The teacher holds Tommy, Dad holds Becky and Maggie puts Tommy's bottles in the refrigerator. I feel as though I am observing a daily family ritual. Everyone is calm and comfortable with each other and the environment. After a few more minutes of conversation with the teacher about Tommy, Dad kisses him and says that he and Maggie are going to Maggie's room and Mom will come in a few hours to feed him. Maggie kisses Tommy, picks up Becky, takes Dad's hand and pulls him toward the door. Another day at MCCARE begins for Tommy, Maggie and their parents.

The earliest years of a child's life are ones of rapid growth and development. Experience shows that children who fall behind during these years rarely close the gap (Maeroff, 1985). When we look at kindergarten children, we see some as competent and ready for school success and others as significantly lagging behind their peers. Burton White concluded from his work in the Harvard University Pre-School Project (1965-78) that the degree of a child's competence in language, curiosity, social skills and

cognitive intelligence at ages six and ten can be predicted with few exceptions by age three (Winter, 1985). Children's IQ scores tend to remain stable throughout the school years. The typical school experience does not improve the level of intellectual functioning established by the family and community (Schaefer, 1972).

The Council of Chief State School Officers prepared a statement, in 1988, on Early Childhood and Family Education, Foundations For Success. Their commitment is "...a call to come together at a time of profoundly changed and changing family and societal patterns to create new ways of supporting families and assuring that each child's earliest years provide the foundation for a creative life(p.1)."

The world of childhood has and is changing in significant ways. Economic pressures on families have caused children to be placed in alternate care giving environments at an ever increasing earlier age. Families do not have the time to nurture their babies that they had a generation ago. Parents are asking questions about how to cope with work and home, how to live with the anxieties they have about child care and how to care for their children in a changing world with limited time for family life (Brazelton, 1989).

"The dichotomy between nurturing and education has been blurred beyond distinction both because of the unprecedented societal changes affecting the very young and because we know good care for young children promotes learning and good learning experiences are caring and nurturing. We know families never cease being teachers; we also have learned that teachers

must consider the total well-being of the children they teach." (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1988, p.2)

In Missouri, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has taken the position that the public school's interest in and concern for children's education begins at the onset of learning. The role of the school during the early years, however, should be to assist parents with their teaching and nurturing responsibilities and to strengthen the family unit--not to replace parents as primary teachers. The Parents as Teachers (PAT) Program is parent involvement at its best, because it begins in the home and sets the tone for a positive home-school partnership. It is a family support, primary prevention program with universal access. Since 1981, experience has shown that parents want to be good parents and welcome the kind of support Parents as Teachers offers.

The intent of this study is to learn how the PAT program has been adapted and operationalized in the child care center, to determine if the integrity of the model has been maintained and if the adaptation has had an impact on families. After briefly discussing the methodology, the program and the setting, the essay gives a narrative description and succinct analysis. Geertz defines ethnography as a thick description of our data which is our own understanding of other people's explanations of what they are doing (1972). The interpretation is sorting out the significant pieces and determining their importance.

Methodology

The subjects of this study are educarers(teachers/parent educators), center directors and parents who are participating in a pilot project to adapt and implement the Parents as Teachers program in child care centers during the 1988-89 school year. Seven child care centers in the St. Louis area are participating in the pilot project. The seven types of child care centers are: a nonprofit center, a corporate center, two hospital centers, a United Way center, a community college center and a private center.

Research Procedure

The participant observation approach to this study attempts to document the activities within the seven centers, Center I in particular, and the meaning of those activities from the perspective of implementation of the Parents as Teachers program. The nature of my participation in this study is complex. In my role as training coordinator at the PAT National Center, I have been involved in the development of the model and preservice training to implement PAT in child care centers. My history with PAT begins almost at the beginning. I was a parent educator and participated in the development and implementation of the NPAT pilot project. In 1985 the state legislature appropriated funds to implement the Early Childhood Development Act of 1984 and mandated all Missouri school districts to do so in the 1985-86 school year. At that time, I began working with Mildred Winter to develop and conduct preservice and inservice training for Missouri school districts' parent educators. My bias is specifically my commitment to PAT and more broadly my commitment to the concept of family support. My intent is to use the experience-distant concept (Clifford

Geertz, 1983) in this study of the adaptation and operationalization of PAT in child care centers. However, I found his statement, "Confinement to experience-distant ones leaves him (ethnographer) stranded in abstractions and smothered in jargon." to be true. In fact, the experience-near concept is more applicable to my role. Geertz says, "...what experience-near means--that ideas and the realities they inform are naturally and indissolubly bound to together (p. 58)." As much as I try to employ the experience-distant concept, I find myself caught up in the experience-near. This discussion is an attempt to clarify my awareness of the problem.

Data Collection

To begin my work, I met individually with the directors of the seven pilot project centers. I explained that I wanted to gather information about the degree to which the Parents as Teachers program was being implemented in their center and how it was working. I wanted to gather general information from each center and then focus my observations on Center I, a corporate child care center.

In meeting with the director of Center I, I told him that I would observe the work of the educarers once or twice a week for 10 weeks. I explained that I would be interested in his and the educarers views of ongoing activities and would, therefore, spend some time talking to them during part of their free time. My observations extended from the second week of February through the third week of April.

I gathered data from four sources: on site observation in the center, spontaneous informal conversations with the teachers, parents and director

during my observation visits, formal interviews with the educarers and director, and documents which were center handbook, written records, letters, and newsletter.

On Site Observations

There were two phases in my observations of the centers. The purpose of the first phase was familiarization and collection of general data from the seven centers. It took all ten weeks to arrange and complete the visits. However, I visited Center I during week one and completed the first phase of my observation there by the end of week two. During these two weeks, I observed one drop-off period (6:15-8:15a.m.), one pick-up time (4:15-6:15p.m.), one period when most of the babies were awake (10:00a.m.-1:00p.m., including lunch), conducted interviews with the director and educarers, and engaged in spontaneous conversations with parents. The director, educarers and parents became acquainted with my role as participant observer and for the most part accepted my presence in the center. At the same time, I became familiar with the structure of the day, the educarers, parents and babies. When possible, I had spontaneous conversations with parents and educarers to establish rapport and check the accuracy of my observations. I spent most of the time taking notes and maintaining a low profile. I did, however, always respond to parent and educarer initiated conversation. On several occasions I was asked to help out with a baby for a few minutes. Staffing at the center is not complete at the beginning of drop-off time and at the very end of the day. Sometimes an extra hand proved helpful.

For the next eight weeks, I spent one to four hours per week observing educarers, parents and babies. I organized my observations and recordings around several factors. First, during each observation period I attempted to be near both educarer and parents to record observed behaviors and conversations. Second, in order to gain an understanding of life for the babies, I recorded as much as possible, while simultaneously attending to educarer and parents, baby activity. In particular I recorded educarer-baby interactions and parent-baby interactions. In writing notes, I tried to describe events as objectively as possible with interpretive comments on the side.

Informal Conversations and Interviews

From the beginning of the study, I stressed with the director, educarers and parents that not only was I interested in understanding the activities of the Parents as Teachers program, but also, in understanding what meanings they thought were contained in the activities. In order to gain this understanding, I took advantage of opportunities to engage in spontaneous conversation. In these conversations, I asked questions about activities, their understanding of observed actions and interactions, or their reactions to particular events that had been observed or reported. I tried to ask open-ended questions such as, "How has implementing PAT impacted your work with parents, with babies?" and to parents, "How do you feel about participating in PAT?" I had several purposes in these kind of exchanges: to gain data on the operationalization of PAT, to gain the educarers' perception of the impact of PAT, to gain the parents' perception

of PAT and it's impact on them, and to gain understanding of director and educarers' rationale for decision making regarding the implementation of PAT.

Documentation

In addition to my observations, I also obtained written records, center handbook and a copy of the center newsletter.

Parents as Teachers in the Child Care Center

The Parents as Teachers Model

Missouri's Parents as Teachers Program represents a unique partnership between families and schools. Its primary goal is to give all children the best possible beginning, laying the foundation for school life success. The teachers are the parents, supported by professional educators who provide them the tools they need to effectively teach and nurture their young children. Parents as Teachers is designed to serve all parents--from single teenage parents to two-parent, well-educated families. Experience has shown that parents want to be good parents and welcome the kind of support Parents as Teachers offers.

The program began in 1981 as a four year study in four school districts and is now funded by the state legislature and offered in all of Missouri's 543 school districts. Currently over 53,000 families are being served in the PAT program. The program is based on research evidence that the first years of life are critical in terms of the development of language, intellectual abilities, and emotional well-being and that parents

play a key role during these years in determining what the child will become (Burton White, 1978).

The results of an independent evaluation of the PAT pilot project furnished strong support for the belief that providing high quality, highly interactive educational support to parents during the formative first years of a child's life directly impacts on a child's ability to age three. Specifically, at age three, children in the project: (1) were significantly more advanced in language development than their peers; (2) had made further strides in problem solving and other intellectual skills; (3) were further along in social development. All these competencies are predictive of and essential to later school achievement (Winter,1985). Parent satisfaction with the program was nearly 100 percent.

In 1985, Center II, a nonprofit child care center, adapted the PAT program model for families whose infants were enrolled in the center. The specific goals for children, parents and educarers are generic to the PAT program in any setting, as well as those that are unique to the program in the child care center.

Goals for Children

* Maximum development of language, intellectual and social abilities
* Increased self-esteem
* Enhanced curiosity

Goals for Parents

* Increased knowledge of child development and age appropriate child-rearing practices
* Enhanced observation skills
* Increased confidence in child-rearing
* Successful parent-child attachment
* Awareness of conditions that may affect optimal development
* Positive attitude toward the child care center
* Increased confidence in and closer working relationship with the child's educarer

Goals for Educarers

* Increased knowledge of child development and age appropriate child-rearing practices
* Increased ability in early detection of developmental lags and emerging problems
* Increased ability to empower parents as teachers and nurturers
* Enhanced active listening skills
* Positive recognition of parents as experts on their child
* Acknowledgement of family strengths
* Recognition that a variety of family forms can promote healthy children and adults
* Acknowledgement that cultural differences are valuable and valid

The model for the PAT adaptation that is the focus for this study was developed during the Center II pilot project. When Center II began integrating PAT in their program in 1985, nine families with infants all in the same room enrolled in the program. The lead teacher was a certified parent educator (henceforth called educarer). She was assisted by two other teachers and developed the model for adapting PAT to the child care center

Program Components

Personal Visits in the Home and at the Center. A minimum of four personal visits and daily mini-visits are conducted during a family's first year at the center.

The first personal visit is held in the home, shortly after enrollment, but prior to the infant's entry in the center. The educarer and another team member conduct the visit. This is often the first time the family has met the educarer. Meeting first in the family's home helps to establish rapport in a more comfortable and relaxed atmosphere.

The second personal visit is on the baby's first day at the center. This is a visiting day. The parent(s) and baby stay one half day. Parents play with their baby and care for him as they would at home. This allows the baby to meet new people and a new environment while being reassured by his parents' presence. The personal visit is held at the end of the half day visit. It gives parents an opportunity to address questions and concerns about their baby and/or the center. The educarer reinforces the importance of the parents' role as teachers of their baby as well as

parenting skills and strengths observed during the first personal visit and the four hour visiting day.

The third personal visit is conducted at the center about two to four weeks after the baby has entered. It is scheduled at a time convenient for parents and educarer. Parents and educarer discuss the baby's development and behaviors observed both at home and center. This helps parents and educarer to become aware of emerging skills and new behaviors, provides an opportunity to discuss changes in the baby's routine, increases parents' and educarer's observation skills, provides an opportunity to present developmental information and address questions and concerns. The educarer reinforces parenting skills and strengths of the family.

The fourth personal visit is held approximately six months following the third visit. Parents and educarer discuss and review the baby's development, new behaviors and routines, emerging skills and questions or concerns. The educarer presents new developmental information and suggests ways for parents to encourage development at home. She continues to reinforce the importance of the parents' role as teachers of their baby, identify strengths and increase the parents' feelings of competence.

Daily mini-visits provide time for parents and educarer to review the baby's day. The educarer relates some of the baby's activities, interactions or behaviors that occurred that day. Emerging skills and developmental characteristics that were observed are described to parents The educarer continues to reinforce parenting skills, strengths of the

family and parent-child interactions. Parents use this time to ask questions, raise concerns and discuss changes in their baby's routine.

Room Seminars at the Center. The goals of the room seminars are: to provide information about child development and topics of interest to parents (separation, sleep patterns, language development, etc.); provide opportunities for parents to share experiences and concerns and develop an informal support network. Room seminars are meetings for parents whose babies are in the same room. The rationale is that as PAT expands in the center other lead teachers will participate in the PAT preservice training and become educarers. The information and discussion at room seminars is developmentally and age specific to the babies, all of whom are close in age and in the same room. Room seminars are held bimonthly, usually in the evening at pick-up time. Parents are involved in scheduling room seminars and may chose early morning, lunch time or evening meetings.

In addition to room seminars, the center offers workshops, parent-child activity days and other special events for all families enrolled in the center.

Involvement in School District PAT Programs.

All parents are encouraged to enroll in their local school district's PAT program. Participation in both PAT programs provides parents the following additional opportunities: for more personal visits in the home; to establish a partnership with the school district as well as the child care center; to become acquainted with families of like-aged children in

their neighborhood; and to take advantage of the developmental screening available through the school district.

Overview of PAT in Six of the Seven Pilot Projects

Center II

The infant/toddler program in the Center II serves 114 families who live or work in this suburban St. Louis Community. Since their pilot project began in 1985, the center has sent four more teachers to the PAT preservice training and expanded service from nine to 72 families. After four years of operation and with supportive leadership from the director, PAT has become well integrated in the Center II's program for families.

The center is following the service delivery model described on pages 9-14 of this paper. In response to parent input, a potluck supper and social time has been added to the room seminar format. The potluck supper begins at 5:00 p.m. and the meeting at 6:00 p.m. Since the center is open until 6:00 p.m., child care is available if parents wish to have time for "adults only" socializing during the potluck portion of the meeting. Educarers provide the main dish and each family brings a side dish or dessert to share. Parents choose meeting topics and dates based on a parent needs assessment and the PAT curriculum. For example, choices for the November,1988 room seminar were: overview of development 3 1/2 to 8 months; nutritional needs and eating patterns of babies 3 1/2 to 8 months; and ways to foster literacy beginning in infancy.

The supervisor of the infant/toddler program coordinates PAT. He is responsible for collecting reports from the educarers on recordkeeping,

personal visits, room seminar schedules and inservice training hours required for recertification. He also conducts monthly staff meetings with the educarers.

The director of the Center II is very supportive of PAT and requires parent participation upon enrollment in the center. She feels the program has given her staff valuable training in child growth and development while providing a very strong base for parent education and family support. The center is experiencing tremendous success and plans to expand next year by sending six more teachers to the 1989 preservice training.

Center III

The goal at Center III is to provide a warm, loving, supportive and challenging environment for children. The Center is licensed for 138 children, primarily families employed by the hospital in which it is located, however other families in the area may enroll on a space available basis. Families with children six weeks to 12 years of age may enroll in this center. Before and after school and summer programs are also available. Participation in the pilot project is the Center's first attempt to integrate PAT in its program for families.

The Center director and supervisor of the nursery participated in the 1988 PAT preservice training. They began by recruiting and enrolling four of 48 families serviced by the nursery in the fall of 1988.

The Center is following the PAT service delivery model described on pages 9-14. The Center director is responsible for the supervisory and administrative tasks associated with PAT. The nursery supervisor conducts

the personal visits and mini-visits. The director and nursery supervisor together plan and conduct room seminars.

In an effort to increase services to other Center families and to establish a collaborative relationship with local school district PAT programs, Center III invited parents and neighboring school districts to a special parent meeting on effective discipline. Parents in the PAT program choose room seminar topics based on a parent needs assessment and the PAT curriculum. The seminars are held in the early evening.

The director feels the program has been successful and plans to expand by sending two more nursery teachers to the 1989 preservice training. The current goal is for all families with babies in the nursery to participate in PAT.

Center IV

This center opened in August 1988 to offer quality child care to the employees of a St. Louis hospital. It is a non-profit, family oriented center developed to offer security, love and support to both parents and children.

The Center serves families with children six weeks to five years of age. PAT program implementation began in January 1989 with seven families whose babies are in the infant/toddler area. As enrollment in the newly opened center increased, enrollment in PAT has grown to 15 families as of May, 1989.

The supervisor of the infant/toddler area was the developer of the Center II PAT pilot project in 1985. She has worked with the PAT National Center training coordinator to develop and conduct preservice and

inservice training for teachers in child care centers. Prior to the opening of the Center IV, she sent one of the infant teachers to the 1988 PAT preservice training. Together, the supervisor and educarer provide PAT services to 15 Center IV families.

The center is following the PAT service delivery model described on pages 9-14. Due to the developmental process of opening and establishing a new child care center, only the personal visit and mini-visit components of the PAT program have been implemented to date.

The center director and supervisor feel the program is meeting with success. Feedback from parents indicate that PAT provides opportunities for working parents to increase their parenting skills, especially parenting skills specific to working parents; ease their child's transition into child care; and network with other parents experiencing similar parenting/career stresses. Center IV plans to send two more teachers to the 1989 PAT preservice training. The goal is for all staff to be trained educarers and for the center to be able to offer PAT to all its families.

Center V

Center V is sponsored by the United Methodist Church and is a member agency of the United Way of Greater St. Louis. The center participates in the Missouri Division of Family Services' Vendor Care Program and USDA Food Program which help meet some of the cost of care for employed parents or parents who may be in school or training programs. Kingdom House exists in order to meet the needs of families in the community for care of children three months through six years of age. The

goals are to provide a comfortable, secure and happy environment so that children can grow physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally according to the best known principles of child development.

The Center V social worker and the supervisor of the infant/toddler area participated in the 1988 PAT preservice training. Although they have the full support of the director and are eager to begin implementation of the PAT program, they have been unable to do so. In November 1988, Center V opened a second day care center. The time required to establish a new center precluded implementing a new program this year. The original plan was to have the new center open and operating by September 1988. As so often happens in renovation, work delays pushed the opening back to the end of November. Plans for 1989 include implementation of PAT.

Center VI

This center is in its second year of operation and is licensed to serve 140 children age six weeks through kindergarten. The center primarily serves professional families in west St. Louis county. It exists to meet the needs of working families and their children. Goals of the center are to provide a program to encourage the development of: positive self-esteem, independence, language, intellectual, social and motor skills. Parents are an integral part of the program. It is the belief of the director that child care centers must offer information and support to families.

The center director and lead teacher in the two year old room participated in the 1988 PAT preservice training. All eight families with babies in the infant room have enrolled in the PAT program. The educarer and infant room teacher conduct personal visits together. They are following the PAT service delivery model described on pages 9-14 of this paper. The center director participates in the planning and conducting of room seminars. She also completes the supervisory and administrative tasks required.

Several parents are also participating in their local school district PAT program. They report that they find it very helpful to be in both programs. The center program helps them with child care issues and the stress of being professional, working parents, while the district program helps with more general parenting issues and provides an opportunity for networking with families in their neighborhood and establishing a relationship with the school. They also take advantage of the developmental screening offered by the district. The center director has collaborated with the PAT administrators in neighboring school districts. They have agreed to provide developmental screening at the center and assist with some special meetings for parents.

The director feels the PAT program has added an important dimension to her center. She plans to send the infant room teacher to the 1989 PAT preservice training as well as the infant teacher in another center she operates. As funds permit, the director's goal is to expand PAT to include

all families in the infant/toddler area and then to total center involvement.

Center VII

Center VII is a community college child development center, primarily serving students and families who live or work in the surrounding community. The goals of the center are to provide a safe, loving and challenging environment where children can develop positive self-esteem, a good foundation for learning with a balance among language, social-emotional, intellectual and physical development. The program fosters a greater feeling of love and human awareness through the teacher-parent-child relationship. The infant/toddler area serves 40 families. Eight of the families are enrolled in the PAT pilot project.

The infant room supervisor and center child care specialist participated in the 1988 PAT preservice training. The supervisor conducts personal visits and both educarers plan and conduct room seminars and special meetings for all center families. They are following the PAT service delivery model described on pages 9-14 of this paper.

One of the educarers has video taped babies during the day and used the videos at room seminars to discuss developmental characteristics and emerging skills. She found this to be a most effective teaching tool--especially to help parents become better observers of their children.

In addition to room seminars and large group meetings, this center offers four social events for families during the school year. The educarer reports that the bonding of PAT families to other parents,

educarer and center has been incredible. Parents feel that they have an extended family at the center.

The center director is excited by the success of the pilot project. She plans to send two more teachers to the 1989 PAT preservice training. Her goal is to ultimately have an educarer in each room so that all families in the center have the opportunity to participate in PAT. She is concerned, however, about the difficulty child care centers have in securing funds, from very tight budgets, for PAT training and program implementation. She, other center directors and PAT National Center staff need to explore the possibility of state funding. Perhaps through the Missouri Division of Family Services which is the state day care licensing agent.

Commentary

After observing the seven PAT pilot projects and interviewing center directors and educarers, I found that while the PAT adaptation was being successfully implemented in all but one of the centers, the directors were all struggling, to greater or lesser degrees, with the issue of integrating a new program into an established organizational system.

I appreciate Seymour Sarason's statement, "It is characteristic of the model process of change in the school culture that the intended outcome (the change in the regularity) is rarely stated clearly, and if it is stated clearly, by the end of the change process it has managed to get lost." The model of the PAT adaptation for child care centers was explained to center directors prior to the 1988 PAT preservice training.

Two directors participated in the training required of educarers. In choosing staff to participate, it appears that directors took several factors into consideration. Two high priority factors seem to be: 1) a teacher deemed to be of high quality and 2) a teacher who seemed to be committed to the center and unlikely to leave in the near future; that she was "worth" the investment of time and money required for training and implementation of the program. I sensed that this opportunity was a reward for excellent work and commitment to families, children and center.

Other factors considered by directors were: degree of interest expressed by the teacher, current level of responsibility in terms of having time, ability to relate to parents and degree of flexibility necessary to adapt to changes involved in the development of a new program. What this meant in terms of program implementation was that some educarers were not daily teachers of pilot project families' babies. This immediately altered the concept that the baby's teacher and family's educarer were one and the same--thus being able to use and reinforce information and techniques presented in the PAT program. It is too soon to determine if this has had an impact on program effectiveness. Perhaps it is a problem for a future case study.

Corporate Sponsored Child Care: Center I

The concept of this corporate sponsored childcare center originated in mid 1984 from employee input on the childcare issue. An independent organization was formed to do research and analysis and make a recommendation to management on the feasibility of a sponsored childcare. From

late 1984 through mid 1985, competitive practices were studied, corporate demographics were profiled, site alternatives were analyzed, business plan projections were completed and a presentation, including the recommendation to proceed, was made to management. Management approved starting a daycare on an experimental basis. Center I was formed as a wholly-owned corporate subsidiary to implement a comprehensive, high-quality, early child development program. The center would be designed to serve employees and their children ages six weeks through kindergarten. From October 1985 through June 1986, Center I completed the following: selected the site, renovated the building, hired the initial staff, initiated an employee communication campaign, arranged licensing, developed curriculum, chose the name of the center, through an employee contest and developed a payroll deduction system for tuition. Center I opened for business on June 30, 1986 with 28 children and 17 staff. April, 1987 was a red letter month for the center. The center generated a positive cash flow for the first time! By the end of the second year of operation, enrollment was up to 124 children and the staff increased to 39. Three major events occurred in 1988: renovation of eight additional classrooms, to accommodate 150 more children, with funding committed by the corporation; implementation of Missouri's PAT program; and the corporation's receipt of the Department of Labor's EVE Award for its extraordinary efforts to enhance employment opportunities for its workers through the childcare program. Currently enrollment exceeds 150 and staff has increased to 49.

The first baby arrives at Center I shortly after 6:15 a.m. and the last goes home at 6:15 p.m. Beth is the supervisor and educarer of the infant and young toddler area. There are three infant rooms, each with eight babies and a separate area for eight young toddlers (10 to 16 months). Each room has 2 1/2 teachers. Beth floats or fills in for an absent teacher. She warmly greets parents and babies as they arrive. Parents remove their baby's outer clothing and get her settled for a minute while filling out the "My Day" form, replenishing the diaper supply, placing bottles and food for the day in the refrigerator and talking to Beth or the teacher. The "My Day" form is a vehicle for parent-teacher communication. Parents record when and what the baby last ate, when she woke up, how she slept and any special comments or instructions such as diet, medication, activity or injury. The teacher records meals/feedings, naps, medications, diaper changes and comments so parents know what their baby's day was like. Some babies take a nap immediately upon arriving, others are fed breakfast, some are cuddled and held and some enjoy looking at their surroundings. Everyone seems happy and relaxed in the bright, cheerful atmosphere. Most of the babies take a morning nap, but all are usually up by 10:00a.m. Although each baby is on an individual schedule for feeding and sleeping, most are awake and involved in an activity or interaction with the teacher from about 10:00 a.m. to noon. The babies nap again after lunch for several hours. Parents are encouraged to come feed/nurse their babies as often as their schedule allows. They are likely to come and go from the infant area throughout the day. The relaxed,

almost slow tempo of teachers, babies and parents reminds me of a family working together and caring for each other.

The goals of Center I include:

* That children develop self-awareness in a climate of genuine affection and warmth
* That children develop an awareness of other children and adults and to have a positive approach to life
* That children develop attitudes of wonder and eagerness to learn
* That children form good work habits and accept responsibility, in so far as each is able, for their actions, their routines, their thinking and their learning
* That children develop the ability to ask questions and solve problems relating to their social, emotional, physical and intellectual development.

The Integration of Parents as Teachers in Center I

The context of each child care center requires individual strategies for the integration of a new program. This is a brief overview of how PAT has become part of Center I's services for families.

The supervisors (Beth and Mary) of the infant and toddler areas participated in the 1988 PAT preservice training. Together, the director and educarers decided to implement the PAT model described on pages 3-6 of this paper and begin with eight families whose babies were between

5-1/2 and 8 months of age. They began in September 1988 by sending a letter explaining the program to all families with babies in the infant area. Simultaneously, the director and supervisors began telling parents about PAT as they gave tours of the center to new families. Word about PAT spread quickly and parents began asking about participating. Several parents knew about the school district PAT program and indicated that it would be much more convenient to participate at Center I. After assessing which parents seemed most interested, a letter was sent inviting eight families to participate in the pilot project. All eight accepted the invitation.

The first personal visits, in the home, were held in September. The center visits, mini-visits and room seminars have been held as outlined in the model. A potluck supper and toy making workshop have been successful additions to the program.

Beth and Mary each serve four families. The PAT model has been changed in that Mary is not the teacher of her PAT families' babies. Beth and Mary have talked about the process of developing and integrating a new program into an existing system. Based on what has happened here, choosing strong, competent teachers as the center's first educarers seems to be more important for initial program implementation than strictly following the concept of the model. It makes sense that program implementation in different centers should be as individualized as service delivery is for each family.

Beth, supervisor of the infant area, left Center I in the middle of March to care for her very ill grandmother in another state. She and Mary discussed this change with their PAT families. To become better acquainted

with the PAT babies, Mary began spending one hour two or three times a week in the infant rooms. She is conducting mini-visits with parents when they come to the center on their lunch hour and at pick-up time. It is her perception that this has been an easy transition for parents. Mary began collecting all the "my day" reports and meeting with the teachers once a week. They discuss the development of each baby and work on strategies for more effective teacher-baby interactions. The center director has also been meeting with the teachers every other week to provide support and guidance. They have noticed that the additional inservice training and support has resulted in more appropriate teacher-child interactions and more comprehensive "my day" reports. As a result of these changes, the director is creating a new position of infant-toddler supervisor. Mary will officially take on this role in June. She and the director are in the process of carving out the details of the position. Two teachers in the infant area and one in the toddler area will participate in the 1989 PAT preservice training. As the first year of PAT implementation ends, the director feels it is important to follow the model with the educarer being the teacher of her PAT families' babies.

Understanding the Impact of PAT at Center I

Based on the limited amount of observational data that was gathered, I will utilize Homan's concepts of activities, interactions and sentiments in discussing the interpretation of the impact of PAT on parents, children, educarers, staff and Center I.

The hypothesis is the PAT program provides the context for one of two types of activities which lead to interactions, which lead to sentiments, all of which result in impact on parents, children, educarers, staff and Center I.

Activities

Clearly, the dominant thrust has been interactions. The activities are the framework in which the interactions occur. "In the external system, the relationship of mutual dependence between activity and interaction links the division of labor with the scheme of communications in the group." (Homans, 1950, 101). In PAT, the job of supporting parents in their teaching role cannot occur without a series of interactions, beginning with the home visit activity. The ongoing process of interaction results in the intertwining of activities to accomplish the job.

The activities can be categorized as two types: activities inherent in the components of the PAT model; personal visit in the home, personal visits at the center, room seminars and mini-visits and those activities that are part of the structure of the center; parent drop-off and pick-up of children, group meetings and parent visits to the center at lunch and/or break time.

Interactions and Sentiments

From my interviews and observations, the parent-educarer interactions form the basis for the discussion of the activities.

Personal Visit In The Home

During an interview, I asked the educarers (Beth and Mary), "Since implementing PAT, do you see your role as a teacher differently?" They most emphatically stated that the home visit broke down barriers and enabled them to establish a partnership with parents that was unique to their experience. Mary said, "It (the home visit) has given me an understanding of parents, children and families that I never had before. I've seen the baby's room and toys, I know how the dog acts, and I've observed parent-child interactions on their turf for the first time."

Beth said, " We (parents and educarer) became mutual experts, sharing information about the baby--his development, interests and needs." In taking a retrospective look at the first year of implementation, both educarers felt the home visit to be key in the frequency and content of their interactions with families. They both said they viewed their work from a different perspective now. They always felt they were working with parents, but prior to PAT there was a sense of the "teacher being in charge". PAT has provided a framework for establishing a partnership with parents.

In informal interviews with parents, I asked the question, "How do you feel about PAT?" Parents' responses included:

"The teacher really cares about us and our baby."

"I liked having her come to our home...she knows us as a family now...not just another baby she watches every day."

"The home visit is the best. It says the teacher and center really care about us."

"I don't mind paying a little more when the teacher comes to our home and listens to what we tell her about our baby... and gives us ideas and helps us understand him (baby).

The home visit seems to set the stage for establishing the home-center partnership, which is key for successful implementation of the other activities.

Personal Visits At The Center

The first personal visit at the center occurs just a few weeks after the home visit. Beth and Mary said it reinforces the rapport they established during the home visit and helps families' have a smooth entry to the child care system. Parents feel comfortable discussing questions, concerns and feelings about center procedures and the important issue of leaving their baby. After at least two personal visits at the center, parents said:

"I can tell her (educarer) my worries and it is always ok."

"I am more comfortable with center rules because I know the teacher really cares about us and our baby."

"I'm in the school district PAT program, too. I love both...they focus on different needs...the center teacher talks to us about what our baby is like during the day and helps me feel ok about leaving him...the parent educator talks to me about what's happening at home. We like the group meetings, too."

Room seminars

Parents were eager to attend the first room seminar to meet other parents. Parents and educarers shared with me that they learn from each other at the seminar. The roles of mutual experts and partners in providing the best care for babies is reinforced. From my verbatim notes, parent comments include:

"Talking about discipline is helpful. It's good for us both (parents) to hear the same thing...we work things out better."

"I'm glad to know my baby isn't the only one crying all night."

"If we didn't have these meetings, I wouldn't get to know other mothers...it's hard for all of us."

"We've really made some good friends here and our children will be together a long time."

"I like getting to know other people and babies at the meetings. Sometimes I try to come here at the same time as Peggy does during the day...I can nurse my baby and talk to her."

"We like learning more about Tommy. Making toys is great...I feel proud that he likes them."

"The center should offer this to everyone. I hope they have it when we're in the toddler room."

"I think Center I really cares about us as a whole family. We don't have anybody here, so this is important to us."

"It's really hard to stay for meetings...we're so tired and busy, but we're always glad that we do. We'd never go back out once we got home."

Contacts At Drop-Off, Pick-Up And Lunch Time

Mini-visits between parents and educarer occur whenever parents are in the center. The educarers way of relating to parents communicates trust, confidence and caring. For example, when leaving his son in the morning, a Dad said to the educarer, "We can't leave Tommy on the couch or in his infant seat alone anymore. Especially when he becomes excited or upset--as he has been while teething. He is so strong and active he throws himself out of it." The educarer responded," You are right. Do you think we should stop using the infant seat here?" The educarer reinforced the importance of Dad's role as decision maker about his son.

Another time a mother came to nurse her baby during her lunch hour. She said to the educarer, "She(the baby) isn't nursing well lately. She jerks away from the breast and looks around every time she hears a noise. Am I doing something wrong or is she telling me she doesn't like nursing anymore?" The educarer responded by reassuring the mother that she wasn't doing anything wrong and took advantage of the teachable moment to relate the baby's behavior to development in terms of increasing awareness and interest in her surroundings. She interpreted the explanation by adding, the baby also likes to use this special time for socializing with you. This kind of spontaneous interaction and interpretation of behavior is deemed important by the educarer and parent.

Statements from my observation and interview notes include:

"I like to know exactly what my baby does every day...how much he sleeps, what he plays with, if he's happy, what he likes and how much

he eats. I like for the teacher to really tell me something when I pick my baby up...I feel I've missed so much."

"It's great getting suggestions about things to do at home...and to know what to expect...what's normal."

"This center really tries to make life easier for working parents...I come over every chance I get...to feed my baby and play with her. The teachers always talk to me and I get to visit with other mothers, too."

"We (parent and teacher) help each other out... in terms of naps, understanding fussiness...it's great, we're both talking about the same things now."

"Other parents are asking to be in PAT all the time. They seem to feel the difference...we're special."

"I come at lunch time much more often than with my first baby...I feel so welcome anytime I come."

An educarer said, "I can't explain it, but the parents and I are a team working to give the best we can to the babies. I've never felt quite this way before." The other educarer told me, "I feel a real difference in my relationship with parents...something I've never felt in the many years I've worked in child care... a real connectedness."

I did not expect to learn from the educarers that "one of the greatest things to come from PAT is networking with other center staff." Mary, supervisor of the toddler area, is pleased she has been able to establish a new relationship with the infant teachers. She said, "I'm approachable now, not just a supervisor sticking my nose in their room." Staff

development, especially the application of the empowerment concept and process has added a new dimension to staff meetings, according to Mary. The educarers have noticed a change in the attitude of teachers towards parents after observing the educarers model different techniques and establish partnerships with parents. The educarers share with teachers the rationale and an interpretation of why they handle situations in a particular way. Center staff are asking to participate in PAT training and to implement the program with their families.

The relationship parents establish with educarers seems to extend to Center I in general. A parent said to me, "PAT is a way Center I tells its families how much the center cares about and values them." Another parent told me, "Center I doesn't have to have PAT, but it sure helps make the center a great place for us."

School district administrators, legislators, foundation funders, community leaders and other professionals have told me that one reason PAT is so successful is that it is a program in which everyone wins. Parents and children are hungry for the support and information and everyone who becomes involved feels better as a result.

My observations and conversations at Center I lead me to hypothesize that the same is true in the child care center. Homans' discussion about the mutual dependence of interaction and sentiment is reflected in my study of PAT at Center I. He states," If the frequency of interaction between two or more persons increases, the degree of their liking for one another

will increase, and vice versa." (Homans, 1950, 112). Beginning with the home visit, the sentiments resulting from parent-educarer interactions were those of liking one another. This sentiment led to more interactions and more positive sentiments. Parents come to the center more often, stay longer, talk more comprehensively about their child's development and their feelings and extend activities and interactions with educarers and other parents. For example, according to both educarers and parents, PAT parents come to the center more often at lunch time than other parents. I observed PAT parents talking to educarers and other parents about developmental characteristics, emerging skills and observed behaviors more often and with greater understanding than non-PAT parents. Sentiments of support, friendship, caring and appreciation are evident in my field notes.

Based on this limited field study, PAT has impacted the Center I in several ways.

* Parents, educarers and other Center I staff feel more empowered in their role as teacher of young children.
* Parents, educarers and other Center I staff have increased their skills in observing developmental characteristics, emerging skills and behaviors in young children.
* Parents and other Center I staff have increased their knowledge of child development.
* Parents have increased feelings that Center I, educarers and other center staff care about them and their children.

* Parents have developed a support network with other parents.
* Parents have learned techniques for parent-child interaction and ways to encourage development.
* Children spend more time in developmentally appropriate activities and interactions with parents and educarers.

Implications for the Future

This project serves as the beginning point for a more comprehensive study of the impact of PAT on families and staff in child care centers. Not only is the data scant, but issues of biography and history are not discussed. C. Wright Mills' Sociological Imagination (1959) challenges that "No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, history and their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey" (p. 6). Day to day reality dictates what is accomplished more often than I like to acknowledge.

Inspite of the limitations of the project, several important points have been made clear. It takes time to incorporate a new program in an existing organizational system. There is a developmental process that new programs experience. My work with school districts and experience with child care centers leads me to believe this process is similar in both organizations. It takes more than one year to adapt a model and feel secure in its implementation and operation. The individual character and needs of the seven pilot sites resulted in several deviations from the model. Yet after one year, the program is in operation in six of the seven

sites, the integrity is being maintained and goals are being attained. In fact, the success of the program, in combination with other factors, is influencing one center director to change the centers' structure to include an infant-toddler program separate from the preschool program.

In sum, center directors and educarers feel good about their accomplishments and plan to expand Parents as Teachers in 1989-90.

Several elements have emerged as factors in successful program implementation. Family support programs need a framework that is flexible enough to accommodate individual needs. Individual needs include those of formal and informal groups or organizations, systems and individuals. The program must be vital and able to respond to the needs of those involved. Giving ownership to every player is key. Flexibility, allowance for growing pains and the ability to adapt to new situations are characteristics found in the leaders and implementers of six of the seven pilot project centers.

As I observe teachers, parents, education systems, child care systems, corporations, legislators and community leaders attempt to work together to provide the best for children my conviction that family support is critical for America's future is confirmed. On April 26-28,1989, I participated in the Public Policy And Family Support And Education Colloquium sponsored by The Center for the Study of Social Policy, Family Resource Coalition, Friends of the Family, Inc. on behalf of the State of Maryland and Harvard Family Research Project. Presentations by Lizbeth Schorr, Heather Weiss, Kathy Briar, and Ann Rosewater all stressed that the systems this country

has created to protect and nurture children are crumbling. They were not designed to address the intensity of stresses and problems that families face today. Therefore, they are unable to reach families early enough to offer the assistance and resources needed to help achieve promising futures. Our systems are also unable to address the plight of the most vulnerable families. Public leaders are looking for innovative ways to intervene and help children who begin their lives in dysfunctional families and are inadequately prepared to meet the demands of society. PAT is an important strand in any comprehensive family support program. The success of the PAT model may help influence national decision makers of the economic value of family support and prevention programs.

Where to go from here is a challenging question. There seem to be many options. Extending this project to gather more on site data to support the hypotheses seems important when looking at strategies to increase collaboration between organizational systems which provide support services to families.

There is a critical need for family support programs in this country today. The new federal welfare reform legislation, the Family Support Act of 1988, requires all states to implement programs which help AFDC families become self-supporting. These facts and the implications of this limited study suggest that a project designed to study the developmental process of integrating Parents as Teachers in an existing organizational system would be helpful.

A final thought about where to go from here stems from one of Lizbeth Schorr's four elements of a family support program (presentation April 26, 1989, Public Policy and Family Support and Education Colloquium). That is, to provide the time, training and skills necessary for staff to establish professional relationships with families. A study of the impact of Parents as Teachers on staff development in child care centers might be significant.

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